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TELEGRAM

January 08, 2003

To: No Action Addressee
Action: Unknown
From: AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI (ABU DHABI 85 - ROUTINE)
TAGS: OEXC, SCUL, KPAO
Captions: None
Subject: UAE SUCCESSFULLY COMMEMORATES INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION WEEK
Ref: None

UNCLAS ABU DHABI 00085

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INFO RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE

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SUBJECT: UAE SUCCESSFULLY COMMEMORATES INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION WEEK

1. SUMMARY: AT A TIME WHEN THE U.S.-ARAB EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE IS THREATENED, PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE ORGANIZED THREE MAIN ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE U.S. EDUCATION AND CULTURAL EXCHANGES DURING INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION WEEK. PROGRAMS ADDRESSED THE CONCERNS OF UAE STUDENTS, PARENTS, AND ACADEMICS WITH REGARD TO TRAVELING TO THE U.S. PROGRAMS ALSO OPENED NEW CHANNELS OF DISCUSSIONS AND COOPERATION WITH LEADERS IN EDUCATION AND CULTURE WHO BELIEVE IN THE QUALITIES OF U.S. EDUCATION AND WHO ENCOURAGE INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING OF U.S. SOCIETY AND VALUES. END SUMMARY.

12. PAO TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION WEEK TO HONOR DR. ALI RASHED AL NOAIMI, DEPUTY VICE CHANCELLOR FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS, UAE UNIVERSITY. ON NOVEMBER 20TH, AMBASSADOR WAHBA PRESENTED DR. AL NOAIMI WITH A CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION AT HER RESIDENCE FOR HIS SUSTAINED EFFORTS AND CONTINUOUS COOPERATION WITH THE US EMBASSY IN ABU DHABI AND THE CONSULATE GENERAL IN DUBAI, ON EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS AND FOR HIS SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING THROUGH US-UAE EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGES, PARTICULARLY THE FULBRIGHT PROGRAM. DR. NOAIMI APPRECIATED THE RECOGNITION, NOTING THAT THE UAE UNIVERSITY VIEWS THE U.S. AS THE PREMIER DESTINATION FOR ITS STUDENTS AND GRADUATES, WITH BETWEEN 60 TO 75 PERCENT OF UAE NATIONAL STUDENTS BENEFITING FROM THE U.S. EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM. THE PRESENTATION RECEIVED PROMINENT COVERAGE IN ALL MAJOR LOCAL ENGLISH AND ARABIC NEWSPAPERS. HEADLINES INCLUDED: "U.S. EMBASSY HONOURS UAE EDUCATOR" (GULF NEWS), "IN APPRECIATION OF HIS EFFORTS TO IMPROVE CULTURAL RELATIONS, THE U.S. EMBASSY HONOURS DR. ALI AL NOAIMI" (AL KHALEEJ), AND "THE U.S. AMBASSADOR EMPHASIZES THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION TO ENHANCE COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN CULTURES" (AL ITTIHAD).

13. PAO EDUCATIONAL ADVISORS CONDUCTED AN OUTREACH VISIT TO RAS AL KHAIMAH (RAK) EMIRATE, ONE OF THE POOREST AND LEAST PRIVILEGED EMIRATES IN THE UAE. ADVISORS MET WITH THE PRESIDENT OF AL-ITTIHAD UNIVERSITY, THE CULTURAL ADVISOR TO RAK CROWN PRINCE, THE PRESIDENT OF RAK TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION, AND THE DIRECTOR OF RAK EDUCATION ZONE. ADVISORS DISCUSSED SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES OF PAO AND IDENTIFIED AREAS OF COOPERATION WITH THE EMIRATE IN THE EDUCATIONAL, CULTURAL AND INFORMATION FIELDS. THE ACADEMICS EXPRESSED A DESIRE TO COOPERATE WITH US ON ALL LEVELS BUT FOUND DIFFICULTY SEPARATING PEOPLE'S DEMAND FOR U.S. EDUCATION FROM THE CURRENT TENSE POLITICAL SITUATION IN THE REGION. THEY WERE VERY INTERESTED IN OUR CULTURAL PROGRAMS AND IN ENCOURAGING STUDENTS TO TRAVEL TO THE U.S. BUT ALSO EXPRESSED CONCERN FOR CURRENT U.S. FOREIGN POLICY IN THE REGION, U.S. SECURITY MEASURES, AND NEW VISA REGULATIONS NEGATIVELY INFLUENCING STUDENTS AND PARENTS DESIRE TO STUDY OR TRAVEL IN THE U.S. ALTHOUGH THESE MUSLIM ACADEMICS WERE RELIGIOUSLY CONSERVATIVE, THEY DID NOT HESITATE TO EXPRESS THEIR RESPECT AND SUPPORT FOR U.S. EDUCATION AND CULTURE.

14. PAO EDUCATIONAL ADVISORS, AS PART OF THEIR OUTREACH IN RAK, CONDUCTED A POWERPOINT PRESENTATION ON UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION IN THE U.S. FOR 30 HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS AT RAK ENGLISH SPEAKING SCHOOL. PRIOR TO THE PRESENTATION, ADVISORS VISITED THE OFFICE OF THE CROWN PRINCE AND SPONSOR OF THE SCHOOL WHO WELCOMED OUR VISIT TO THE SCHOOL AND STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION IN BUILDING BRIDGES AND CONNECTING PEOPLE. THE SCHOOL IS VERY WELL-ESTABLISHED IN THE EMIRATE, OFFERS THE BRITISH CURRICULUM AND IS CURRENTLY SEEKING U.S. ACCREDITATION FROM NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES.

15. ABU DHABI-BASED SEMI GOVERNMENT ARABIC DAILY, "AL-ITTIHAD", PUBLISHED FOR THREE CONSECUTIVE DAYS ARTICLES ON U.S. EDUCATION, APPLICATION PROCEDURES, AND EDUCATIONAL WEBSITES. THESE ARTICLES WERE PROVIDED BY PAO EDUCATIONAL ADVISORS IN AN EFFORT TO UTILIZE THE MEDIA TO PROMOTE U.S. EDUCATION AMONG A WIDER AUDIENCE. FOLLOWING THESE INSERTIONS, THE NEWSPAPER AND THE PAO ADVISORS RECEIVED INQUIRIES AND REQUESTS TO PLACE OTHER ARTICLES ON U.S. EDUCATION.

16. RESULTS: EXCELLENT. THROUGH SUSTAINED EFFORTS AND OUTREACH TO PROMOTE U.S. EDUCATION AND CULTURE, WE WERE ABLE TO REACH OUT TO A LARGE AUDIENCE WHO ARE VERY RECEPTIVE WHEN IT COMES TO EDUCATION DESPITE THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARDS U.S. FOREIGN POLICY. EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH HAS PROVEN, ONCE AGAIN, TO BE A VERY EFFECTIVE TOOL IN BRIDGING THE WIDENING GAP THAT SEPTEMBER 11 CREATED BETWEEN THE U.S. AND MANY ARAB NATIONS.

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